E. MATURE AGE

1. *The Bantu Ideal.*

581 The married man is called " he who has his home " (a ni le
354 kwakwe) in opposition to the single man (nkhwenda). But let
562 us say at once that the kind of individual called bachelor does
885 not abound amongst the Bantus. Only the utterly wretched, invalids, and the weak-minded, are deprived of legal marriage, which for the black man is and remains the one object in life. It is through his wife and children that he becomes somebody in society. This fact does not appear during the first year of wedlock, for the newly married woman must cook at the fireplace of her mother-in-law. She is hardly more than a servant during a whole year ; she does not possess her own pot ; and this must be so because she does not yet eat the mealies of her own garden, having ploughed her fields in her former domicile the previous year. Her husband eats with her. He is not yet
595 a lord. But if he is rich, if he is the heir of an important man, he will not be long in buying a second and third wife.

These new marriages will be contracted like the first, but with less pomp. It may even happen that the feast is held in the husband's village, if he is middle-aged and is celebrating his fifth or sixth wedding.

595 For each new wife, he will build a hut. He has begun his
342 village when building the house of his first wife, the great wife,
556 (nsati lwe nkulu) as she is called, who will remain the principal
542 one whatever may happen. While, without compass, he was
361 drawing on the ground, with the marvellous instinct of the South African Native, the circumference of the circle on which the patched reed walls of his dwelling were to rise, while he was covering this circular wall with a conical roof, he was saying to himself : " I establish my home ; I inaugurate my village ". During the following years, the aim of his life will be to complete little by little another wider circle... When he has bought his

1: Junod M-5 (1895-1909)1927 Thonga

765 the headman of a large village in the Shifimbatlelo district (18 miles North of Lourenço Marques). His son Mugwanu had been chosen to take his place, but Manyibane had a younger brother, called Fenis, who had taken care of the village in the meantime. All the relatives were assembled. Groups were formed under all the trees. At 4. 30 p. m. the men began to gather near the old black-roofed hut ; one of them, an elderly man, took between [824] his teeth a piece of a root of a special juncus, called *sungi*, bit off a little of it and, after having chewed this substance, rubbed both his legs with it (evidently to find courage and strength for the work he was undertaking) and penetrated into the old hut. He came back bringing with him a dozen beautiful white eggs!.. The hen did not know that the habitation of the deceased was a tabooed grave, and had laid her eggs in this convenient refuge! Then all the men approached and began to pull out the poles of the wall, digging on both sides of each pole ; some of them lifted the roof so as to make room enough for the poles to be pulled out. This work was accomplished with great care ; the earth was carefully placed in a pot and slowly poured out some distance away ; the poles were gently laid down in front of the entrance, on the top of the door, which had been previously placed there, thus forming a regular heap. These precautions are taken out of respect for the deceased. It would be an insult to him to do otherwise, and a relation guilty of such an offence "would at once be seized by colic, the disease of the wolves (masule)." Some boys, clad in European dress, threw the poles violently on the ground. Spoon laughed : "They know the *shilungo*, the ways of the White men," he said. "They have lost their respect!"

765 342 When all the poles were removed and there remained only the reeds of the wall, the men jumped on the roof. The roof is a big conical basket made of sticks tied together and covered with grass. It at once sank down under their weight. But they wished to flatten the cone, to crush it down to the level of the 765 soil. Therefore some of the men pulled the sticks out of the roof to lessen the resistance ; some kicked it in order to break the sticks. They could not succeed ; the cone was still there more or

(L.), with its white or pink blossoms, which have spread all over the coast.

Having now finished our first general inspection, let us add some details about the huts and the open places in the village.

The hut, the construction of which we shall describe later on, (Part IV) has an opening (nyangwa) of variable dimensions closed by a door. In some parts of the Gaza country it is so small that one must positively crawl to enter it. Everywhere one must at any rate stoop low (korama). As regards the *threshhold* (ntjandja wa shipfalo), it is not taboo to step over it. The headman's threshhold however is dreaded because it was treated with medicines when the hut was built, so it is taboo to sit on it; these powerful medicines might do harm and even cause death. In the middle of the black clay floor is a kind of raised circle, in the centre of which fire is occasionally lighted in winter on account of the cold. It is the interior *shitiko*. Cooking may be done here if it rains; glowing embers sometimes remain on it during the night and numberless babies have been burnt to death by falling into the fire while their mothers were sleeping. On the left, on entering, is the sleeping place (shilawo) of the wife, on the right that of the husband. They both however generally spread their mats on the right and sleep beside each other. It is only during the tabooed periods (menses, nursing), that the husband must keep to his own particular side (p. 188).

The back of the hut is generally occupied by the big basket (ngula) in which clothing and seeds are kept. This spot is called *mfungwe*. In the roof *(lwangu)* are fixed or suspended various articles: ears of sorghum or millet, cobs to be used as seed at the next sowing, assagais, sticks and knobkerries etc., and against the walls one frequently observes rough drawings made with white clay, or, in the vicinity of towns, chromos of Queen Victoria, Edward VII, or Don Carlos, as the case may be!

The hubo and the bandla differ from each other. *Bandla* is a Zulu word which has supplanted the Ronga term *shisiso*, viz., "the place where one finds shelter from the wind." Men light a small fire there to warm themselves. They also eat together

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of building will be stopped at once and the little community will find another place to which to move! Moreover the guilty woman will have to ask the principal wife for forgiveness. 2) A second great taboo is this : — No one must wash his body during the whole "buhlapfa", as this might cause the rain to fall and it would interfere with the building operations.

3) The building of the huts begins immediately, each man making the circular wall first. When all the walls are ready,

Carrying a roof.

the *roofs are carried* from the old village to the new by all the men together. They lift each roof on to their shoulders, after having removed the old grass, and go out of the village, not by the main entrance, but by one of the back gates which has been widened for the purpose. A broad road has been prepared through the bush. They follow it, marching as fast as they can, and singing the obscene songs which are reserved for special occasions (see Part VI). In these they insult the women who accompany them, carrying the baskets, the mortars, the pestles. "The village is broken in pieces, so are the ordinary laws. The insults which are taboo are now allowed" (Mboza). This suspension of morality in speech is only allowed on the day when roofs are carried to the new village. Some days later, again, the women will take their revenge when they smear the floor of the huts ; then they too will sing their songs, insulting the men. But

621 824 765 troublesome and he should wish to remove them, he must ask some one else to do it. On the day of his death, or rather when his hut is crushed down, a branch of that tree will be put on the place where the threshhold was, and another used to close the main entrance of the village, a new entrance being then made through the fence and used as the gate during the rest of the mourning period.

621 833 3) He has sexual relations on the new spot on the first night with his principal wife ; in this way he will *fuya muri*, viz. "possess this tree," and also *fuya muti*, "possess the village." The Ronga *fuya* corresponds here also to the *boha* of the Northern clans (Compare boha puri and fuya ñwana, page 57). If someone precedes him in sexual intercourse, he is guilty ; he has "preceded the village" (rangela muti). By this act the headman has definitely left the old village. The others can go back to it to fetch what remains ; for him it is taboo.

621 831 834 342 4) The same day, all the inhabitants come and move all the roofs, if it is possible to do this in one day. One hut is rapidly built to afford shelter to the inhabitants, in case of rain. The first roof to be transported is that of the hut of the principal wife. This is also done to the accompaniment of obscene songs. These songs are not allowed when only one hut is transported, which may happen when some one goes to live in another village.

It is definitely a custom which goes with the moving of a whole village.

5) The following day two huts are erected, one for the men, the other for the women, because they must not sleep together. "They are still in the bush ; it is buhlapfa ; the village is not yet firm." Those who break this law cause injury to the headman. The bones will soon reveal that "he has been preceded as regards the village ; (a rangeliwile muti)." All the huts are smeared twice ; the women begin to sleep in them, but not the men. The fence and the main entrance must first be prepared.

621 789 6) The *main entrance* (mharana). The men pull up the grass all the way from the back hut to the place where the main entrance must be, so as to make a road all through the village. All the dried plants weeded out during this operation are carefully

462 thank (tlangela) her husband for his kind help! This is her
273 method of notifying him that all the grain has been harvested, as, whatever the man's share of the work may have been, the mealies belong to him.

462 The main work of the man is the *building and repairing of the*
356 *huts*. This is truly an arduous job, but it is not of yearly recur-
342 rence. Every third or fourth year they are obliged to re-thatch the roof. The huts are built and repaired during the winter, from May to September.

A second domain, which is exclusively man's, is the *care of the cattle* ; the boys milk the cows, construct and repair the kraal : the little boys herd the goats, and the young men the oxen, as has already been mentioned.

462 It is also the men who *make all the utensils and tools* used in the
411 village, pots and other crockery excepted ; mortars, pestles,
294 handles for axes or hoes (mimphinyi), wooden platters, carved or forged articles, all this work pertains to them. They must also make the *ntehe* for their wives, or sisters, after the birth of the babies. This is probably the explanation of the curious fact noticed amongst Native Christians, namely that they are much more clever at needlework than their wives. Big fellows are often seen forsaking the hoe to work with the needle, and there are fathers who make their own clothing as well as the dresses for their wives and children!

462 *Hunting and fishing* are, of course, also men's work... or pastime.
224 For some of them hunting is an actual trade, at least such was the case in former times, before the White Governments imposed strict regulations and levied heavy licences on that sport. We shall study, in Part IV, the curious customs relating to these two favourite occupations of the Natives.

574 A great part of their time is devoted by the men to *paying*
517 *visits*. They are very fond of calling on each other, and sometimes
484 they go great distances to see relatives or friends. They do not travel to pay visits only, but they frequently journey to claim payment of their debts (milandju). To regain the possession of a miserable head of cattle they willingly lose whole weeks! And what endless discussions in the *hubo*, when an unfortunate visitor

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of square houses or galvanised iron sheds, which are a poor imitation of European dwellings. However, from the practical point of view, this change is unavoidable. It even undoubtedly stands for progress.

The *Native hut* is prettily shaped. I prefer the Thonga form, a circular wall on which a conical roof is placed, to the Zulu, a beehive resting on the ground, or even to the Kaffir, which combines the features of both, having also a circular wall but with a cupola roof. The conical

Phot. H. A. Junod.

Christian village of Shiluvane.

roof is a better protection against rain. But all these forms of dwelling have one great fault: they are not healthy. The rays of the sun cannot penetrate into the hut, and, though the top of the reeds is sometimes not plastered and allows a certain amount of ventilation, the air cannot circulate, because the hut has no window. Smoke must make its way through the thatch and it is very difficult indeed to obtain any current of air inside. If a new type of hut were to be adopted, with high walls, good-sized doors and windows, and a roof slightly overhanging the wall, these defects would be remedied. But civilised Natives have not tried to follow this plan. They have at once copied the European system, just

1: Junod M-5 (1895-1909) 1927 Thonga

000 preserving only those which are compatible with Christian morals and civilisation?

These are only questions which I put, and not definite opinions to which I would commit myself. At any rate, if the tribal system must and can be maintained for an unknown period, the Government ought to take some steps to ameliorate it, or at least to prevent its deterioration. It ought to pay special attention first of all to the character of the chiefs. They are after all Government servants, ruling to a certain

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Phot. H. A Junod.

Muhlaba's house (in the Thabina Location, N. E. Transvaal.)

extent over British or Portuguese subjects. Moral qualifications ought to be required of them as well as of any other civil or judicial employee. Their conduct ought to be the more carefully watched in that the new conditions under which they are placed are eminently dangerous to their morale. Under the old tribal law, their power was checked by the indunas ; they could even be deposed by a family council. Now the chief feels himself supported by the White Authorities and is tempted to take less care of the interests of his people. Many of them have become desperate drunkards. In some places they are allowed to obtain drink, which is absolutely refused to their subjects, and they sink deeply, morally speaking. This is a lamentable result indeed.

301 Beads are merely an ornament and have no ritual value, except
789 the large white ones used by people possessed by the Ba-Ndjao spirits. (Part VI.)

B. HABITATION.

● 342 While there has been such a rapid change in Thonga customs regarding dress, — so rapid that in these last fifty years they have changed more in that respect than during the fifty preceding centuries —, in the field of architecture the tribe appears to have stood still ; their huts are built precisely as they were in ancient times. It is true that it is easier to put on a jacket and trousers than to alter the style of one's house : besides it must be admitted that the Thonga hut possesses several advantages. It is comparatively easy to construct, cool in the hot weather, perfectly watertight in the rainy season and is fairly ingeniously contrived.

That which is called *yindlu* (yin-tin) properly speaking, is more especially the *roof* of the hut (lwango, dji-ma) ; for it is the roof which is the most troublesome to make. A strange fact too, and one which appears paradoxical, is that, in the construction (ku yaka) of the house, they begin with the roof!

[341] The Thonga architect — and every man is his own in that
335 country — gathers together a few hundred straight sticks, one
342 to one and a half inches in width and from three to ten feet in length. He digs a hole in the ground, a yard and a half in diameter and 16 inches deep, in which he arranges his sticks in a circle, points downwards, at the bottom of the hole, and supported in such a manner that they lie at an angle of 45 degrees with the ground. Any one of these sticks will thus be at about a right angle with the opposite one, and all together they form, as it were, a huge conical basket with its point in the hole. To fasten all the sticks together, he ties them to round hoops (something like cask hoops) made of bent branches. These hoops (balelo, dji-ma) are concentric, very small at the bottom, and getting gradually larger as the work progresses. Any spaces which remain between the sticks first arranged are filled up, one after the other, with

shorter sticks, which are pushed in here and there as the building proceeds, and the architect ends by obtaining a sort of enormous, pointed hat lying on its apex, all the branches and sticks composing it being solidly tied together with strips of a very resistant bark, that of the bulolo Hibiscus (p. 33) or of other trees. It is now only necessary to turn the big cone over, and place it on a wall, and there you have the typical Thonga hut. 335 342

The *wall* is built with stakes, about four feet in length above the ground, planted at intervals along the circumference of a circle which the architect traces with wonderful accuracy in the sand. He then takes two flexible branches and fastens them to the stakes, at a height of one foot above the ground, the whole way round the wall, one on the inside, the other on the outside. Between these branches and in the spaces from stake to stake are inserted reeds of the same height, completing the wall : the reeds are firmly fastened to the supporting branches by a band passing alternately over and underneath them. The same operation is repeated half way up the wall (two feet above the ground), and again at three quarters of the height (three feet). The wall is now ready to put on its large conical hat, which will fit it perfectly : a cone on a cylinder!

Placing the roof in position (ku tlakula yindlu), the next procedure, requires the display of considerable muscular energy. All the men of the village are convened for the job : their strong arms raise the monumental basket and place it triumphantly on the wall. Beer is then given to the helpers, and a little jollification ensues ; the equivalent of the "fête du petit sapin enrubanné" which the carpenters celebrate in Switzerland when they have completed the roof of a house. 342 476

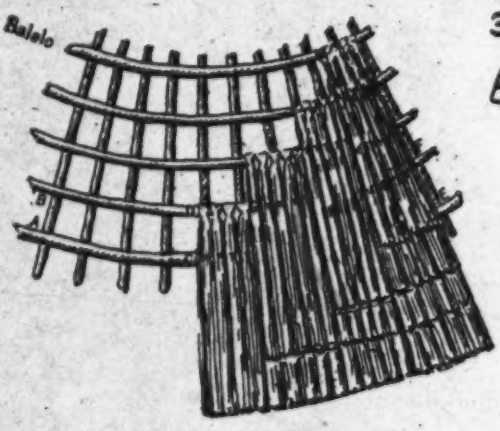
The roof must now be *covered* (fulela) *with a thatch* (byanyi) to make it impermeable to the heavy rains of the wet season, and it is here that considerable ingenuity is displayed in the method adopted. The Thonga pulls up by the roots, in the low lands on the borders of the lakes, a kind of very wide grass (luhlwa), which attains a height of one and a half to two feet : this he separates into small bunches which he lays side by side on the ground and ties together, one by one, with his 342 [824]

342 string made of bark, fastening them with a special knot. The result is a series of hundreds of contiguous bunches seemingly sewn together with a regular seam, at about 6 inches above the roots. This can be rolled up like a mat, forming a beautiful sheaf, and carried away on the workman's shoulder to be placed on the roof. Once there, it is unrolled and fastened to the hoop of branches forming the outer circle at the base of the cone. One man runs a huge needle, threaded with a long string, through the thatch, taking care to do so just above the seam which unites the bunches of grass ; another man, who is inside the hut, receives the needle and pushes it back again through the thatch, but, in his case, just underneath the seam : the two thus continue sewing the thatch, with long stitches, all round, so that the seam itself is securely fixed to the outer hoop at the base of the roof. When they have completed the circle and provided the hut with a first belt of thatch, they fetch another sheaf of grass and unroll it on the next hoop above. Now a certain proportion is to be observed between the distance separating the two hoops (A B) and that of the seam from the roots of the grass (C D) ; that is to say if, for instance, the space between the concentric hoops is five inches, the seam will be six inches above the roots ; whence the following result : the roots of the thatch fixed to the lower hoop (A E) reach as far as the second hoop (B F) and even overlap slightly. The fresh sheaf which will be sewn on to the second hoop will thus overlap the first sheaf in such a way that its seam will be fastened practically on the top of the roots of the lower sheaf. On the second hoop there will therefore be a double thickness of thatch (at point G) all round the hut. As the *luhlwa* is about 24 inches in length, it follows that the third and fourth sheaves or layers of thatch will also cover the second hoop ; the thickness of the thatch at this point will thus be fourfold, as also all over the hut. A well built roof of this description is perfectly rain-proof. As the work goes on, progress becomes more and more rapid, as the hoops diminish in size and the apex is reached almost unexpectedly.

On the top of the cone is fastened a *circular crown* (shihlungwa) of very carefully plaited grass ; the architect doubtless had a

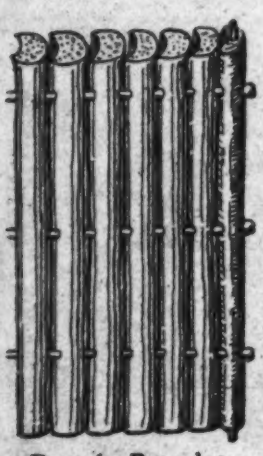
double object in view in thus crowning the huts : first to keep the rain from percolating through at the top, and secondly to impart to the building, by means of this highly ornamental addition, a degree of finish, an air of beauty, ease and opulence which it certainly would never have possessed had it terminated in an ordinary point. It is, no doubt, owing to the fact that the crown is the glory of the house that it is removed as soon as the occupant dies!

There are still two more operations to be performed before the hut is finished : *the plastering* (bama (Ro.), phama (Dj.) and the making of the *door*. But these two jobs can be undertaken at the same time for the very good reason that plastering is the work of the wives, while making the door is that of the husband. Accompanied by other women of the village, the future mistress of the hut starts out for the marshes to collect some black clay (bompfi). If the marshes are too far off, she will content herself with digging in one of the ants'nests on the hillside. These terrible ants, which destroy everything, collect large quantities of hard earth, with which to build their nests, and this differs largely from the sand of the surroundings. (It may perhaps be simply sand hardened and changed by the acid secretions of the termites.) The shirundju, the conical basket which women carry on their heads, will be used to take home clods of red or black clay, and, using the same baskets, they will fetch from the cattle kraal some fresh dung which they mix with the clay, inside the new hut, pouring water on the mixture to reduce it to the proper consistency. They tread the unsavoury mud with their feet, and, with this semi-liquid mortar, plaster the wall on the inside,



Construction of the Thonga roof.

introducing the mud between the reeds and spreading it out with the palms of their hands until it forms a smooth layer all over the interior. Not a ray of light can now enter the hut, except through some small open spaces to be seen, here and there, between the roof and the top of the wall. The air circulates more or less through these small vents, which, however, were not included in the original plan of the hut. The remainder of the clay makes a hard even flooring which will be re-covered from time to time with a fresh coating of black plaster (I. p. 187).



Door of a Ronga hut.

As regards the *door*, the Ba-Ronga in the country round Rikatla generally make it of the wood of the mimale palm (Raphia vinifera, see p. 4). They cut down one or two of the giant leaves of this tree, which grows in the marshes. The leaf itself is one enormous central stalk with narrow folioles on either side; these are cut off and the nerve remains: a sort of gigantic switch, twenty to thirty feet in length, about four to six inches wide at the base and tapering gradually to its point, convex on one side, and concave on the other. Once dried, it turns a grey colour. The interior is a fibrous pith, of extraordinarily light weight, whilst the exterior bark is very thin, hard and shiny as though it had been varnished with copal. It is impossible to imagine a lighter wood. Comfortably established under the shady trees of the square, our joiner cuts the nerve into several pieces of a given length (say about four feet, the height of the wall). This is not difficult, for it is only necessary to cut through the thin outer bark, when the knife slips through the inner pith, like so much butter! These lengths are then bored through from front to back in three places, say at one, two and three feet from the bottom, and three stout sticks are passed through the holes, firmly holding the several pieces of the nerve together: this makes the door. The ends of the transverse sticks are fixed into a pole which is pointed top and bottom, thus forming pivots or hinges.

342 The *sill* consists simply of a piece of wood (ntjandja wa shipfalo) laid flat on the ground, with one edge raised so that the door cannot be opened outwards. It must always open inwards, doubtless with a view to facilitate the exclusion of unwelcome visitors by the simple expedient of sitting with one's back against
784 it. The threshold is not attended with taboos, excepting that of
342 the principal hut of the master of the village, beneath which

The Thonga hut. *Phot. A. Burel.*

protective drugs have been placed at the foundation of his village. It is taboo to sit on it (this may cause disease), but not to tread on
177 it. Most huts are now fitted with padlocks which are, of course,
414 of European origin. The palm wood doors are only seen in the districts where the mimale palm grows.

342 A number of small sticks are stuck in the straw crown at the top of the hut, and certainly add to the picturesque appearance of these constructions. It would seem that they are put there to hinder birds from perching on the huts, and more especially to avoid any chance visit during the night from screech-owls (ma-kuñhunu) and other nocturnal fowl, which might alight on

342 the hut and terrify the occupants by their lugubrious cries.

356 I may mention another advantage of the Thonga hut. Between the sticks and the hoops of the roof small interstices, of a few square inches, are left when the thatch is in place ; in these small lockers all kinds of things are stowed away : ears of sorghum, or of millet, kept for seed, sticks, spoons or knives ; baskets can be hung up, by hitching the string by which they are usually carried across

The Native tin town near Pretoria Station. *Phot. A. Borel.*

the shoulder on to the handle of a spoon which is sticking out of the thatch. On entering a hut the roof looks like a regular museum ; it is useful as a cupboard or hanging wardrobe!

343 The Thonga hut, formed of two distinct parts, wall and roof, is far superior to that of the Zulus, which looks like a bee hive, and consists only of a semi-circular roof. Thongas know how to build this kind of huts, but they are generally made quite small (six feet in diameter) and used as shelters for the boys who look

000 after the goats. They are called *mitjhonga*. The Ba-Ngoni adopted their system of building from the Thongas of the plain, and Gungunyana's people constructed huge conical huts, but the

entrances were still smaller than those of the Ba-Ronga. To get in, it was necessary to wriggle, or at least to go on all fours (1). 000

As I am dealing here only with the architectural side of the subject, and do not touch on its social side, let me merely state that the hut is divided into two parts, the right half belonging to the husband and the left to the wife (I. p. 138, 187), that it is contaminated by the death of its owner, and, being looked on as a *rumbi*, a ruin, must be pierced through (I. p. 138), deprived of its crown (I. p. 145), and ritually crushed down (I. p. 157) or closed (I. p. 162, 163).

Nobody will deny that the conical roofed Thonga hut is a charming thing to see, and is wonderfully in keeping with the African scenery. To judge how "Civilisation" improves the condition of things for the Natives of South Africa, let my readers contemplate the Native village as it was a few years ago, in the vicinity of Pretoria Station. Boys working on the Railway had built a horrible mass of tiny sheds of old paraffin tins, cut and flattened for the purpose. There is no lack of imagination in these constructions, but they are a perfect illustration of what the raw Native becomes when plunged suddenly into our XXth century civilisation and attempting in his poverty and ignorance to adapt himself to it. I am glad to say that, on the Missionary Stations, where Native Christians are directed by their missionaries, they build much better houses, having learnt to mould clay into bricks, and to build ovens (I. p. 536). Some of them are good masons and know the use of the level and of the square. There has been also a considerable improvement in the type of buildings erected in Town Locations during recent years. 177 342

(1) I have previously described the *shitlanta*, storehouses of various sizes, made for storing maize and other field produce, and have given (p. 26) an illustration of two of them, especially interesting as they contain the food of Sokis, who died from a sudden attack of pulmonary tuberculosis (lifuba). The provisions which are in the large storehouse must be sold as they are contammated and dangerous to members of his family; the small one contains mealies bought from other people for his widows, who are not allowed to consume the food of the deceased, whilst strangers have nothing to fear from it. (See for the notions of contagion, Part VI.)

787 the two first positions are by far the most common. Let us see what is the meaning of some of the divinatory objects in these different positions :

Baboon +, the village is firm ; no ruins! Baboon —, the village is destroyed ; disease or death ; that which you eat does not remain inside : dysentery.

Ancestor-god +, the gods are happy and thankful. Ancestor-

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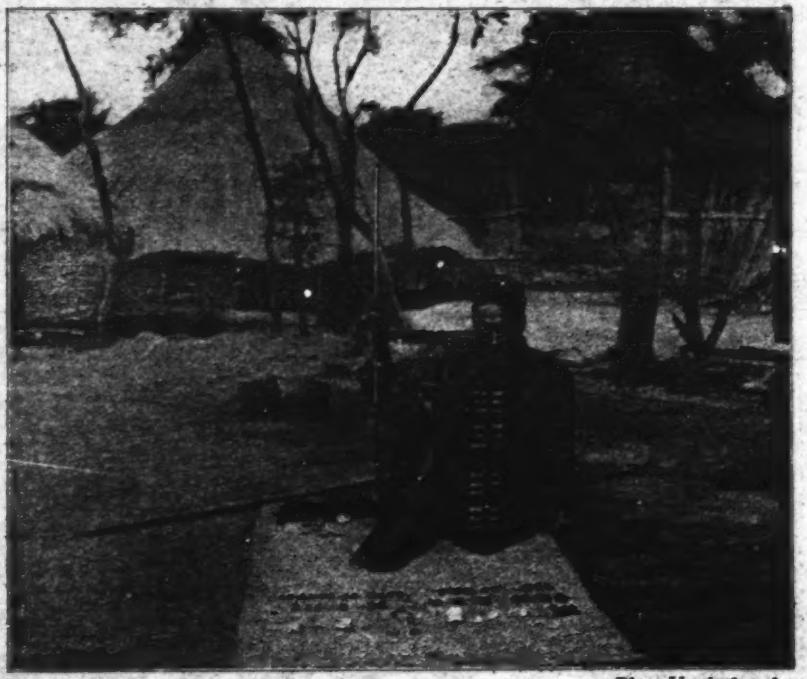

Phot. H. A. Junod.

Maakhelu imitating the "minkono" position.

787 god —, they sleep ; there is nothing to fear ; ×, they are angry, they speak in a low voice ; : , they speak mildly.

Kanye +, the drugs have their eyes open (the two kernels inside the nkanye stone have been removed, and it appears to have two eyes, which are visible in the positive position and hidden in the negative) ; the drugs help, cure. Kanye —, the eyes of the drugs are closed ; the medicine-man will not succeed.

Crocodile stone +, the country is at peace, the village is happy,